

14: Krauss--166

E-5

(no date) 1888

Yakut

Russia

116, 178, 756, 797, 177.79

636.79

The destruction of the Yakut state by a small crowd of strangers, and the administrative measures which were taken by the orthodox conquerors, necessarily impaired the position of the ancient Yakut gods. They soon began to be forgotten. The activity of the missionaries gave this development further support.

It so happened that the gods have been almost entirely forgotten. "I cannot but state," Mr. Middendorf says, "that, upon my questions concerning the peculiar qualities of certain demons and their names, I could get no information, and, upon more urgent querying, only learned that it might have been like that in ancient times. Their religion, which had been flourishing one time, has been forgotten. I saw fragments only; survivals of a former doctrine." The present religious conception, Theodor Solovjev states 30 years later in his article on "Die Ueberreste des Heidentums bei den Jakuten," are permeated with Christian elements. Christian monotheism is the background of their conceptions. The actual state of things evidently represents the last phase of vanishing shamanism.

Nevertheless, the outward conditions of life have hardly changed after the Russian conquest. There is always the same uncertainty of existence; the unsatisfactory conditions for men as well as for animals continue to exist. The sacrificial priests still everywhere and always hold position and duties of priests, physicians, and fortune-tellers (prophets).

14: Krauss--166 [2]

E-5

(no date) 1888

Yakut

116, 756, 554

Because of the lack of trained physicians the Yakut had to have recourse to the shamans' aid whenever a case of disease occurred in his family or among the cattle; and they did so, according to their old custom, even after they had given up their ancient creed. As healing ensued in some cases, faith in the magic power of the shamans continued and prevented the latter from losing all their authority.

14: Krauss--166 [3]
116, 554, 756, 771, 821

E-5

(no date) 1888

Yakut

In view of the permanent uncertainty of his supplies, the Yakut is necessarily always occupied with the question whether the impending hunt or draught will be sufficient to provide food for himself and his family. The shaman will offer his services to answer this question. How could those little-civilized people who have a strong tendency towards miracle religion, renounce it to take their own profit from it? Especially, when frightful and inconceivable phenomena such as snow storms or the north-light confuse them and keep them in constant fear.

Permanent remoteness from other people makes the Yakut reflective. He is always alone with his ideas; so it is only natural that his mental activity is great, his imagination vivid. He longs for the mysterious, for mysticism. This is where the shamans find their field of activity.

Thus, the shaman is approached on the ground of his quality as a physician, fortune-teller, and mediator of secret knowledge; not at all, however, because he is a sacrificial priest or a theologian. The shaman himself endeavors to meet these needs, which make his presence among the population indispensable; and that is why he loses his former character as a priest.

14: Krauss--166 [4]

E-5

(no date) 1888

Yakut

116, 756, 771

Shamanism and the fragments of Christian popular religion, on both of which the Yakuts may inform curious explorers, do not at all represent two entirely different systems of the primitive religious philosophy of the Yakut aborigines, but are just two parts of their faith, namely the practical, and the dogmatical one. Both parts are in different degrees of decay: Shamanism is less degenerated than the rest.

116, 177, 182, 756, 771, 776

Besides the mentioned points, Shaman medicine, fortune-telling, and the like, have had a constant influence on everyday life, and certain compromises with Christianity could not fail to [167] develop. Christianity has more or less been adopted by the majority of the Yakuts; it has undergone some changes under the influence of the "ancient faith" followers. As the theoretical part of the former creed has no immediate point of friction with real life, it has survived in a much more considerable degree, in the form of various traditions.

Thus, the former deities have been changed into devils, or spirits of darkness, under the influence of shaman mystery ceremonies. This is the same sort of metamorphosis which our rusalki, lesije, or domovje, or among the Greeks: Pan, have undergone by lending their appearance to the devil of the Christian faith.

These remarks will be sufficient to clear up certain divergences between the shamans' activity and the well attested information on the original religious doctrines of the Yakuts.

116, 177, 756, 771, 793

In the Yakut district all Yakuts with rare exceptions have been baptized according to the 'ancient faith' [RCH: i. e., Christianity] rite, or were born from parents of that faith. Yet one can hardly be sure that a Yakut, professing the ancient faith, has given up his shamanist creed, or that he does not have recourse to the latter. I have personally known two shamans, one of them in the Yakutsk district, the other on the Kytach island on the mouth of the Lena, who were both known as followers of the 'ancient faith.'

The aborigines seldom have an opportunity to see a priest of the ancient faith. In view of the enormous extension of the parishes, of the scattered settlements, and of the extraordinary difficulties in securing communications, he is hardly in a position to see each member of his faith once a year; and if he visits him in one of the settling-places he may not stay longer than two or three days because he must be through with his travel as long as the paths and roads are practicable. One may safely estimate that eight per cent of the aborigines population has never seen a Christian church. His eminency, the former Yakut bishop Dionysius even told me that sometimes priests had died without having communicated, leaving a written confession of sins.

No wonder, therefore, that the aborigines who are considered as Christians and place the image of a saint in the front corner of their tents which is adorned with wax candles nevertheless approach their shamans in order to satisfy their religious needs.

Despite all this one case remains still obscure; it happened to a priest in the city of Yakutsk, in 1880. The priest had fallen ill and taken recourse to the aid of a shaman, in the expectation that his mystery treatment might heal him. I am not quite positive as to the name, but I should say that the priest was called Popov. I am sure that this is not a sporadic case; it probably occurred oftener than once. In view of such facts nobody should be surprised if a well-to-do Yakut who settles in the city, speaks Russian fluently, has already obtained rewards for religious activity or even for support in building a church, calls on a shaman as soon as a man falls ill, or an animal is hurt, or some other misfortune comes to his house.

14: Krauss--167-168

E-5

(no date) 1888

Yakut

116, 177, 557, 624, 771, 829

It is difficult to admit that the autochthonous Yakut who is so conservative in all his customs and convictions and has not changed his manners and way of life during the centuries, should have yielded so easily in his religious belief. If the Yakut professes the Christian faith because the ruling class professes it and would not sanction the election of a delegate in the village community other than orthodox, and because only for Christians there is a chance to get once a decoration [168] (medal) from that white Tsar, who somewhere, very far, lives in a tent of glass, and, sitting on a gigantic tabouret of sugar, sucks sugar unceasingly--if, I repeat, the Yakut poses as a Christian in order to become the boss of those who surround him, such practical considerations do by no means convince him that it is necessary to give up his shamanism and to approach the latter faith as soon as he feels prompted; particularly because he will not find a similar satisfaction in Christian belief.

14: Krauss--168
116, 756, 776, 782

E-5

(no date) 1888

Yakut

I remember very well, that once one of the shamans (a Christian), whom I had managed to persuade to perform a mystery of the kind which is destined to ask the spirits for something, went into the tent, crossed himself three times devoutly before the saints' images, then turned around, sat down in front of the fireplace and started calling upon his spirits. I should, however, like to report on that mystery ceremony below.

I want to formulate it briefly: there is no hill or slope, no isolated tree, no lake, river, or brook on the roads north of Yakutsk which would not have their protecting spirits. The most prominent among them are simply called ebja-chotun (dear women mother).

Just as the autochthonous Yakuts, the Russian merchants of the area use to sacrifice to the spirit of a locality in order to dispose him favorably. Everybody gives what he can afford; some will tear a piece out of their garments, others will pull some hairs from the manes of their horses to fix them on a tree or sign-post, some give money, and he who possesses nothing, at least a stone, a horse skull, a horse hide, or his stick. Such offerings are called delburgja salaka.

14: Krauss--168 [2]
116, 224, 776, 782, 824

E-5

(no date) 1888

Yakut

I remember to have seen a powerful single tree trunk, densely hanged with motley rags, when I was crossing the Verchojan ridge. My companion and guide in this travel, sergeant in the Yakut Cossack regiment, Mr. P. N. Kalinkin, told me laughingly that those Cossacks who were in charge of the mail convoy used to search the tree and usually found some money, and spent it in drinking. But the same Cossacks who abuse the money given to the spirits will sacrifice to the spirits who provide rich hunting, whenever they go hunting predacious animals or birds and want to equal the lucky Yakut. To be sure, they replace the magic formula which is prescribed for every sort of hunting by some mixture of meaningless syllables and sometimes by fragments of rarely used orthodox prayers.

A Yakut never chooses to sit down in the shadow of a single tree because he is convinced that there lives a ghost on the tree; he rather tries to pass the tree as quickly as possible.

14: Krauss--168 [3]
116, 756, 771, 776, 782

E-5

(no date) 1888

Yakut

I also remember a case where the Yakuts who accompanied me while I was traveling in the Verchojan district, with desperation because of the terrific weather first murmured prayers, calling upon Tangar (God) and Nicholas, God's favorite (Nikolaja Ugodnika), the still honored protector of wandering people, until they started exercising their Shaman magic.

When I asked the people about this rapid change, the sorcerers would calmly reply 'If God doesn't help, the spirits may still hear our prayer, and send aid'. This lack of distinction is, in my opinion, simply accounted for. The people have left one bank without having reached the other; they have not grasped the faith in God, but have given up the faith in the strength and might of their formerly worshiped ghosts to a great extent.

The Yakuts (i. e. the autochthonous inhabitants of the Yakut area in general) are mostly very nervous people, especially the women, among whom persons addicted to the merjak disease are not rare. [169] Mr. Scukin, in his book "Eine Reise nach Jakutsk" derives the term merjak from Yakut imerech, which means "to get into a passion, to rage". He also states that merjak disease is not the only example of nervous, hysterical diseases which are found in the Yakut area, and that when he had been in Kolym and Zavisersk, there had been demoniacs obsessed with crying-mania. (p. 172) An attack of merjak disease as a rule consists in provoking a groundless, instantaneous act of imitation in a person. If somebody makes a short cry, the patient suddenly starts up and imitates every movement however absurd of the other person.

I had several opportunities to see how respectable people may confuse a merjak. [RCH: see category 116, p. 168-169] When I was traveling through Verchojan in an inspection trip, I called on the surgeon Mr. Klimovskij, a man of 60, who had a very good reputation in the vicinity. Soon the judge and the priest also went to the place. When they left, I accompanied them as far as to the door in the front house, where they were helped by my host to put on their clothes. I had never before seen an attack of merjak disease. As though the priest had known that, and had been willing to do me a favor, he threw himself at the judge and pretended to pull the cap from his head. At the same moment, Klimovskij, too, attacked the judge, and started calling him terrible terms of abuse; but he soon regained his composure, and was very much confused.

I had another opportunity to observe a merjak; that was aboard a steamship between Blagovješčenski and Chabarovka. Everybody who had nothing better to do, would follow the poor man; wherever he moved he would be greeted with sudden clapping of hands. The patient would get convulsions and load his neighbor with invectives; and when he soon became calm and modestly went to the other side, the same would happen again. As soon as one drops something in the presence of a merjak, he will repeat the act without any reason whatsoever. Thus, the merjak I was speaking of, who seemed to be a shop-assistant, had thrown his leather-cap into the water, dropped his teapot on the deck, and finally thrown his purse into the water, which made him particularly confused. The second captain of the steamer had made a loud cry and dropped a little

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Yakut-2

116, 158

piece of wood into the water.

I also have seen, in the town of Olekminsk, a woman who used to be a serious and decent person. As soon as she was invited by insolent workmen with a loud cry and the command to do such and such things, she performed the most shameless acts.

I have practically found one reference only in our scientific literature on the merjak disease (known also as olgandza), i. e. on chorea imitatoria, in the Archiv für gerichtliche Medizin, 1868, no. 2, where Dr. Kašin, who has studied the disease in the Yakut territory, has published an article. According to this author, the disease consists in irritability, and, partly, in convulsive movements and actions, which are committed by the patients without consciousness, by imitating the actions and movements of other people.

This disease [RCH: i. e., merjak disease; see category 116, p. 168-169] sometimes takes such a form that the patients comply with the most absurd commands of anybody, and often become the puppets of naughty street arabs.

I have deemed it advisable to insist somewhat on this kind of disease, because the shamans, more than the ordinary autochthonous population, suffer from nervousness and irritability. This tendency is particularly outspoken when they get into ecstasy while performing a mystery, or when they try to excite themselves with wild, frightening cries, turns on the spot, and violent move-[170]ments of the head. The population is of the opinion that the shaman at the time of the mystery performance reveals prophecies, because he is obsessed by the devil, the spirit of darkness, or hell. The Satans either obsess the shaman of their own accord, or because they are invited by the latter.

The initiation of a shaman is performed publicly. An old shaman conducts the one to be initiated on a high hill or on an open field, dresses him in a kuma (i. e. a red cotton wrapper) gives him a scepter hanged with horse-hair, and places nine youths to his right, nine girls to his left. He himself stands behind the novice, to whisper the shaman magic formulas in his ear. The latter has to repeat them:

"I promise to be a protector of the unhappy, a father of the miserable, and a mother of the orphans. I shall honor the demons who live on the tops of the high mountains, and swear that I shall serve them with all my strength. I shall honor, bow to, and serve the highest and most powerful of them, the demon who commands all demons, the master of the three demon sibs who live on the tops of the mountains, him whom the shamans call Sostuganach Ulu-Toen (the frightful, terrible one); his elder son Uigul-Toen (the insane one), his wife Uigul-Chotun (the insane woman), his younger son Kiakia-Curan-Toen (the loudly speaking one), his wife Kiakia-Curan-Chotun, and their numerous family and servants, through whom they send the people diseases, accidents, breakings of legs, and the podagra. I vow to save those who have been affected by these diseases, by sacrificing a cream-colored mare.

"I shall profess and worship, bow to, and serve Ulu Toen's younger brother, the demon Chara-Surun-Toen (the black raven), his son Alban-Buran-Toen (the resourceful venturer), his daughter Kys-Salisaj (the virgin who walks), who prompts people to commit manslaughter, suicide, and calumny. I promise to help rid these people of

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116, 756, 776, 782, 753

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(no date) 1888

Yakut-2

their passions by offering the said demons a black horse.

"I shall profess, worship, and bow to the demon Altan-Sobiraj-Toen (the brazen basin), his wife Altan-Sobiraj-Chotun (the one with the bigger brazen arrow), their daughters Timir-Kuturuk (iron tail) and Kejulgan-Darchan (the important, great, lopping woman), who send mankind chronical abscesses. I shall help free the sick by sacrificing some (Arago) liquor, and offering the demons a motley seamew, as a gift of honor.

"I shall profess and worship, and bow to the ancestor of these demons who is known as Kjun-Zelerjuma-Sakryl-Chotun (the horrible foe of the sun) who has 52 tables full of holes, and 52 servants. She sends the people the passion of game and drinking, of robbery, plundering, abject deeds, and suicide. I shall try to heal those who are obsessed with these vices. I shall kill a red-spotted young mare who is an ambler, and twist heart and liver of the mare round my neck; I shall perform shaman magic to propitiate the goddess.

"I shall profess and honor the demon above the demons of the six sibs who live in the place where the sinners' souls are sent to; I will bow to the one who is known among the shamans as Talirdach-Tan-Taraly-Toen (he who drags into ruin), his daughters Sorocho-Chotun (the wind-driven female beauty, and San-Chotun, and his countless servants who send men and cattle epidemic diseases. To propitiate them I shall offer them a sorrell-spotted mare.

"I shall profess, honor, and bow to the demon Bor-Malachaj-Toen (deformed earth)

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116, 756, 776, 782, 753

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(no date) 1888

Yakut-3

and his wife Bor-Malachaj-Chotun who send mankind various diseases and, especially, death. If in a family children should die, I will implore these demons for mercy, and [171] offer them a black cow with a half-white head.

"I shall profess, honor, and bow to the demon Archach-Toen (the sick one) and his wife Archach-Chotun, who send mankind consumption. I shall heal the affected by offering a blackish brown cow.

"I shall profess, and honor the demon Njas-Elju (cart-horse, death) and his wife Yeryk-Chotun (the sick one) who send the people falling sickness and Siberian pestilence. I shall try to heal those who have been affected by these diseases by offering an eelpout and a trout.

"I shall profess, honor, and bow to the demon Kytaj-Baksy-Toen who gives the Yakuts resourceful smiths and powerful shamans. When Kytaj, angry with a smith, sends him a disease, I promise to kill a red cow in his honor, to spread the blood over all the forge tools, and to burn the heart and the liver to ashes in the chimney. If I should be affected by this disease, another shaman will sacrifice for me and propitiate the demon.

"I shall profess, honor, and bow to the daughter of the demon, Tamyk-Chotun (the haughty one). She sends mankind mental diseases of various kind. Those who have been affected by such diseases I shall heal by sacrificing nine ermines, nine snow-weasels, nine fitchews, and nine pigeons; I vow to catch them alive, to adorn them, and to release them entirely.

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"I shall profess and bow to, I shall honor the shaman woman Tajaktach-Njacaj (the feeble one with the reed), her husband Atyr-Chataj (the eagle) and his countless family and descendants, who send the people oppression of the chest. Those who have been affected by this disease I shall try to save by sacrificing a light-red cow with but one horn.

"I shall acknowledge, honor, and bow to the heavenly shaman Kybilyr Ojun (the white swan), his sister Kytalyktyr-Kyrbyky (the swan of the acute wings). and their mother Soruktach-Sodor (the charitable ruler), who send the people deafness and every kind of ear disease. Those who have been affected by it I shall try to save by offering a red cow with but one horn (agar mostach kugas).

14: Krauss--171
116, 756, 773, 776

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(no date) 1888

Yakut

The tradition about the first shaman goes back to dark times. His name was An-Argyl-Ojun. He was powerful and performed great miracles. He raised the dead, and gave the blind their eyesight back. This fame eventually also reached Aj-Toen (God, the Lord). He sent a messenger to the shaman to ask in the name of what god he did those miracles and whether he believed in him, Aj-Toen. An-Argyl-Ojun (the important shaman) replied three times he did not believe in God but performed miracles by his own strength and power.

Aj-Toen became angry at that and ordered the shaman to be burned. As, however, Ojun's body consisted of countless vermin, one little frog managed to be saved from the flames. The powerful demons who still give shamans to the Yakuts are descendants of this little frog.

Among the major demons, An-Argyl-Ojuna-Kjun-Kigis-Ojun is worshiped (the sun--the unsatiable glutton). An enormous iron stick rests in his hands, on which the head of the one to become a shaman is symbolically put. The head is so shown the entire world from above. The rest of the body is equally chopped into small pieces which are supposed to serve as food for the evil spirits. The latter thus become servants of the novice. The initiated are used to feel all the agonies of being beheaded and chopped in their paroxysms which are full of hallucinations.

Only a few shamans possess the garment in which to perform the mystery ceremonies. As a rule the shamans are exceedingly poor people without a house of their own; they live on their daily resources, on the alms they receive for their performances.

The shaman clothing is expensive, because the ornaments have to be made of chased iron. The size, proportions, and form of all the ornaments of the garment must be exactly and carefully observed, as established by ancient customs. Not every smith knows how to make all the iron ingredients of it; he charges 40 rubles for it.

As far as I know, only a few shaman garments have survived in the Yakut area; it would be easy to enumerate the existing ones. Police and clergy persecute the shamans, take the clothes away and burn it before the Yakut consistory. However, by taking his clothes, one has not yet deprived the shaman of the possibility of performing ceremonies.

The whole clothing of a shaman consists of a caftan made of tanned hides or buckskins; besides he has a drum with a wooden drumstick, and a staff. The caftan is known as kuma; it is hanged with iron ornaments. They represent: a lizard, an emoeer-goose, a pierced sun, the half of a moon, a demon, an iron chain, or also a buck's tail. These ornaments are supposed to remind the shamans and shaman magicians that the ghost realm which he enters during the ceremony is populated by such animals, birds, and fish; the pierced sun and the half moon, on the other hand, hint that twilight reigns where the spirits live. The tail indicates that shamanism is reliable

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Yakut-2

116, 292, 756

and safe, and so does the chain, which serves as a guide to the spirits' realm. Several bands and iron knee-limbs which look like joints and represent bones, hands, and ribs serve the shaman as a shield on his walks through the spirits' realm, and in his battles with inimical spirits.

The sleeves and tails of the kuma are hanged with long fringes of shagreen.

The drum [RCH: of the shaman] known as djugjur. As a rule it is cylindrical and made of wood, and covered with depilated calfskin. Inside small sticks are fixed cross-wise, by which the drum is held during the mysteries. This handle is known as byeryk. The inner side of the drum is hanged with little iron bells which have neither symbolic significance nor a definite form. The drumstick, bylajach-kostjanaja, i. e. wooden stick, carries a ball made of hairy skin (turned outward). The drum is considered as the symbolic expression of an animal with which the shaman goes down to the nether world, to the region of the spirits; and the stick is identified with the whip. By making noise with it the shaman makes known that he is on the way. The staff is used by the shaman in default of a drum only. By leaning upon it, he pretends to be wandering. He also will replace the drum by roaring and wild cries, if he possesses no drum. The kuma and drum are manufactured during shamanic mystery ceremonies.

Now I should like to describe the ornaments of the shaman dress. On the front part of the kuma, from the throat down to the lower edge, three storks are represented (kytaly); this is the symbol of the flying up of the shaman. The ember-goose (kogas), too, is a symbol for the same thing.

On the heart there are three little figures of devils (emjagjal, abasy), the symbol of the permanent presence of the demon in the heart, furthermore two representations of the iron heart of the devil (sjurachtimirja).

On the collarbones there are two iron stripes, which are supposed to be a representation exactly of the collarbones (chamargan-timirja).

Tjargjan-berja, a representation of the devils' eyes.

Ojgos-belgjunja, two hip-bones (in the sides).

Ojgos-umochtar, four devils' ribs from each side.

An octagonal figure with seven holes, stitched in the throat region. The shamans refuse to give any information as to this item, saying that nobody would dare to pronounce their names, and to explain their significance. [173]

On the sleeves; two shoulder-blades (bjulgjul-timirja).

Two ulnas (akymal-chapgaga).

Arm joints, two small bones (begalcach-sjusiega).

Two cartilages of the palm of the hand (akymal-uljuga).

Two bones, representing bird wings (tabytaal-timirja).

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116, 292, 756, 301, 532

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Yakut-2

The fringes on the sleeves mean vulture wings (elie).

On the back: a piece of a seal tail, round children's rattles (abasy-semjaga), all devils ornaments indispensable for a trip to the lower world.

Abasy-balyga, a devil's fish.

Kjular-kjusjanat, the cheerful, gay devil sun; thereon two points of arrows, balyk-kygana, and kandej-sysana, designating the tail of the sun (kjugjan-kuturuka).

Ojbon-timirja, the iron abyss, where the ember-goose hides after having swallowed the shaman. A little bit below, a claw is fixed on this iron, from which the ember-goose will quench his thirst.

Chatat-timirja, the devil's lighter.

Batyrys, a fringe on the tail of the garment.

Two iron arrow points shaped like elk's horns, the significance of which is not certain.

As soon as one finds himself at a loss to help himself by shamanic magic, one approaches a shaman in the hope to reach the desired healing from the demons by the shaman's mediation. A patient may travel hundreds of versts to find a shaman, and as soon as a shaman arrives somewhere, news of his arrival will quickly spread over the entire neighborhood. Curious people, and those who hope to be relieved from their ailments will crowd together at the spot to see the shaman and to inquire of him about the future. The shamans will never refuse to reply, but will assert that they possess the gift of prophecy, especially during the mystery ceremonies.

The shaman is treated with high respect; he gets a seat in the 'honor corner'. He is entertained with liquor and exquisite meals, before they tell him what their wishes are. The shaman will not hesitate to demand that a bull or horse be killed, in view of the importance of the request and the spirit to be called upon. His demand is met without opposition by the Yakuts, and they usually offer the meat not only to the shaman, but also to all those present. A certain part of the animal is destined for sacrifice, according to the shaman's doctrine.

After the shaman has appeased his hunger and thirst, he puts on his kuma (if he possesses one), approaches the fireplace at its front side, throws fat into the fire as a sacrifice for the spirits, grasps the fat smoke with open hands and brings them to his mouth to make believe that he is swallowing them and so gets control over the spirit whom he wants to address with his intercession. Then he takes the drum, sits down before the fireplace on a reindeer skin of good quality, and takes a whip which is adorned with fringes of horse hair and motley rags, or with tails of small game, colored with alder bark. The skin is turned towards the fireplace so that the head is next to it. The shaman now beats his drum and tries to divert the spirits' attention towards himself by sounding a long "ay"; he yawns by devilishly opening his mouth, sounds three times the cry of the ember-goose (cek, cek, cek), apes three times the cry of a stork, three times that of a cuckoo, and three times that of a raven.

Then he calls upon the squint-eyed (inistjagas), deformed (keltjagjaj), lame (dogolon) devil (jugjug emjagjat), and curses himself by assuring the Satan of his devotion, promises to be a faithful servant, and asks him to obsess him. Now he rises, supposing that he now has communication with the devil, that the latter has obsessed him, and that he himself now is in command of the devil's power and might. He calls upon the white bird (jurjun-as): "May this become my place; may green grass grow on here; I have given myself to your life and blood, oh Satan! You root of every evil and mishap (ytyk élju)

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térdè), " so he continues, "you monster of the eight feet, I have joined you, so [174] lend your aid in accomplishing the wishes. I have come from sjurdjach-kjaptjach, sjugja-toenton, the terrible god of the hatchet, and from kini-sjurgju-jutjanjan-sjurgjuja, in order to save him by means of the salutary tool. But you, she-shamans of the fiery lashes, who live in the nether world, do not come to the upper world to fight or curse me. I have sat down on the navel of the earth in order to give protection to the sick. I am well aware of my faults, but suppose I were without faults and give way. Your three black shadows, oh devil, have come upon me, so I beg you, help me. Look, I am offering you such an animal, so help my misery!"

The shaman then sings with roaring voice, that the satan has visited him, that he has made an agreement with the satan; that the latter would hand the request for healing the sick person to his superior in the nether world, or even to the supreme satan. The arrival of the satan and his going back to hell is commented by the shaman with a song which always constitutes an interruption; he sings for himself as well as for the spirits called upon, whose movements he symbolizes by gesticulation; he will leave the house in a hurry, putting his hands on his eyes as though he looked for somebody. Moreover, he plays a march on his drum.

Often, when the healing of a sick man is expected, the Satan may not at once comply with the request of the shaman; or he may pretend that the shaman demand protection of the upper spirits by himself. In the latter case, the shaman makes them understand, by singing songs and beating the drum, that he is walking on a tiresome way, by wandering up a steep mountain or to heaven, in order to get help directly.

Likewise, the shaman prepares to go down to hell to meet satan without previously calling upon the minor spirits of the nether world, and to explain his wishes and hopes to him in a melancholy, drawling song. The utterance is made by means of the following sentence: " I am approaching as a protector, brandishing the heavenly lightning as a whip; give me back the soul of my child, and accept another sacrifice in recompense!". Addressing the oldest of the old women (the devil's grandmother, chottut-torga, he says: "if it is you who has caused the disease, give a sign!".

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Now the shaman starts returning to the upper world (ajhon timirja) and on the wings of the ember-goose (kogas) he goes to heaven, where he, by soothing the upper spirits (érdjargja), says the following sentence: "Mother Sun has consented to the healing of the sick man, so you give your consent, too. You will get gifts if I obtain authorization to heal the patient or hear of a reliable means of saving him. "

The more favorable news the shaman brings back from his trip to the nether world or to heaven, the more excited are those present in encouraging him, and they ask him with satisfaction to hasten the treatment of the patient. Nevertheless the shaman does not hurry up, but will only be moved after long hesitation on his part and long requests on the part of the people.

According to circumstances, the healing is done in different fashions. The shaman approaches the sick person, observes him, spits into the palm of his own hand, and rubs the affected part of the patient's body. Then he assures the relatives, that if the spirits should be pleased by the offering, the patient will at once be healed; if, however, the spirits would not be satisfied with the sacrifice, it would be beyond his, the shaman's means to alter this decision.

Or else, the shaman approaches the patient's couch and cries three times above the head of the latter: "Just tell me what kind of (sacrificial) animal you want; only leave the patient". The spirit who lives in the sick person replies through the shaman: "If you offer me a sadzaga (a cow with white-spotted back) or a bulur (a dun horse), I shall quit the patient". The animal is offered. For this purpose, ten very small larches (Con-kerbjana) and one birch are needed. One larch and the birch are placed before the tent one behind the other. Nine notches are made into the first larch. The other nine are placed around the first two in a semi-circle. On the southern side they are twisted with a linen cord, which is hanged with motley rags and horse-hair. [175]

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The animal to be offered is bound on the tree which has been notched (salama); the shaman, going to heaven, addresses Aj-toen asking pity from him. He says: "As men feel pity towards the patient, and since the old mothers (chotottur) have given back his soul to him (kul), accept the animal instead of his soul". After he has cried three times, and spat at the animal (the patient spits, too), the animal is allowed to run to the flock. Then the shaman continues: "Look, here it is, accept it, give deliverance". "I have accepted it", the devil replies through the shaman, "and the patient will recover within seven, eight, nine days."

The shaman sings that the devil is at once precipitating into the nether world (ojbon-timirja) with the ember-goose; there he delivers the animal offered for slaughter. For concreteness's sake the shaman takes a little board (which may be interpreted as a table), carves a round hole in it, puts a bit of meat on it, and throws everything into the fire. Then he lights the mane of a black horse three times, inhales the smoke, and asks somebody of the present to cut the fire below his head, and to give him a drink of water and sour milk (umdan), of the water of this world. Now he takes three twigs, beats the drum with them, and exercises the last survivals of the devil: "Those of you who have fallen from above, go up; those of you who have come from below, go down, you devils!" Exhausted by the roaring and by the movements on all sides, and giddy, he sits down, wet with sweat. Occasionally, he is unable with exhaustion to put out his kuma.

An animal which has thus been offered is no more used for work. If it dies, an attempt is made to replace it by another one of the same color, because otherwise, the same disease would return to the former patient. It also happens that the animal is offered to the mothers (chottuttorga). Tongue, heart, and liver are boiled and put on a one-legged table which has been carved for this purpose only. Its top carries a round hole. The balance of the meat is eaten by the Yakuts. The bones and other remains are burned after the meal. Thus the sacrifice is accomplished.

It is difficult to consider as normal the mental state of the autochthonous Yakuts while they are performing magic ceremonies. I am not able to read from their faces, which otherwise are very vivid, and I can only say that I always wished that the shaman might finish his ceremony, the earlier the better. Imagine the scene: a little tent with a smoking hearth, before the fire, the obsessed fanatic, who is hardly prevented by two youthful men from throwing himself into the fire or at least breaking his head. The unarticulated roaring and the wild cries may upset even a person who has normal nerves. The shaman is so absorbed in his role that he forgets himself completely. He is evidently convinced of his intercourse with the powerful, evil spirits, whom he need not fear; against whose evil, capricious, and otherwise inexorable will he is now to act by using his entire person which he puts at their disposal. Even if one does not admit that Christianized natives always believe in shamanism, it must be said that all of them, without exception, are afraid of it. Persons who are fully reliable even protested they had known a (Christian) priest who had beaten a shaman and the latter had taken vengeance by making the priest become insane.

The shaman by no means renounces confession and the Holy Communion; he sincerely repents his intercourse with the devil; but he has not as much control of himself as to rid [176] himself of the magic mysteries. Anyhow it is not at all greediness or some other selfish consideration which makes him stick to those ceremonies forever, which bring him nothing but bitter remorse.

I at least never heard anything about a wealthy shaman; on the contrary, the shaman often gets no more than 5 kopeks for healing a sick eye. And how little is this sum worth north of Yakutsk! Some Yakuts refused to accept a twenty kopeks coin for a hazel-hen I wanted to buy, saying that they could not manage to use the money; if it had an eye, they would have used it as a button; but as there was no such, I was to take it back. The smallest unit for them is the ruble.

The powerful nervous shock which the shaman undergoes when performing the mystery ceremony makes him completely exhausted for the rest of the day. When I gathered information among the natives on the Lena and Jana mouths I learned--and the shamans themselves were ready to admit it--that it is generally known that shaman families are seldom happy. The shamans and their relatives are permanently visited by diseases and accidents. But they conform to what they call their fate and declare that they are unable to escape it in view of their hopeless and wretched condition.

Besides the male shamans there are also female ones (udagan). They, too, are servants of the spirits of the nether world. As these women do not enjoy particular fame and no such authority as their male colleagues, recourse to them is taken only when there is no male shaman available; and even so only in case a thief or some stolen goods are to be sought.

The number of female shamans is larger than that of male shamans. According to the natives, those women are more efficient in healing insanes, so that in such cases only preference is given to them.

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When a male or female shaman dies, the corpse is wrapped up in a kuma and put in a piece of wood. At the head a wooden image is put which is supposed to represent a falcon; at the feet a cuckoo, and at either hip an idol which is to indicate that the spirits carry the soul of the shaman away into their realm. The shaman's corpse is not buried, but exposed on high posts at a free place, or on a tree. Such a place is called chorcach.

I succeeded in finding such a grave in the northern part of Verchojan, and in getting hold of iron parts of the decomposed kuma. As a rule the defunct gets his best garment, sometimes also some furs and a cap. A pipe and a tobacco-pouch is put in his hands; at his feet he has a wooden dish with a meal. In some of the graves I found several iron tools which the defunct had used in manufacturing chamois leather out of deer skin; furthermore bows with arrows, and spears for bear-hunting. According to Pripuzov's statements, the Christian funeral custom is beginning to become familiar also with the shamans.

The Yakut Gods have their domiciles either on the tops of the mountains and in the skies: these are the esja abasyar, the upper spirits, or beneath the surface of the earth in the nether world: the allara abasyar, the demons of the lower regions. The gods are partly good spirits who are known as aj and tangara (god), and partly demons. Among the former there are:

Jut-tas olbochtach Jurjun-aj-Toen; this is the true ajbyt aga (father of the creation), the white god on the milk-white, stone throne. He lives in the skies and rules over all the subaltern deities, and does the living creatures in the universe nothing but [177] good. As he is the creator of the world, he is approached on the occasion of the yech festival (religious spring ceremonies) by offering him a caron (a carved wooden mug), and implored for his blessing for all men and cattle. The caron is held towards the skies by the jurjun worshipers who are convinced that jurjun would sip from the kumys. Then the contents of the caron, now blessed by divine lips, is distributed among the Yakuts. The shaman asserts that Jut-tas olbochtach-aj-Toen is seen in the sky during the offering of the caron, giving his blessing to the Yakuts and their flocks from a milk-white throne. According to shamanism there is no god greater than Jurjun.

Ajsyt (the distributor of goods). This female deity has her abode in heaven; she does benefits by sending the people children and facilitates delivery to the women. She is favorable in general and especially towards women; she makes menstruation return after a childbirth. After lucky deliveries she is offered sacrifices. The ceremony will be referred to below. These good deities are not offered bloody sacrifices, only victuals (corn).

Good deities of the second class are: (orolžuttar)

1) An-dojdu-itcitja An-darchan-chotun (the female deity who protects the earth); she lives on big trees and gives the plants growth and fertility. According to the shamans she appears to people once in a while; and he who has had such a vision is happy for his lifetime and will suffer no more from any distress. According to the shamans, they accept various kinds of offerings.

2) Sjugja-Toen, chara-begi-toen (the deity of the cattle); he sends children and calves to the people. According to the shamans he sends belejach-kulun and mjanjach-ogon, i. e. a foal with a spot on his forehead, and a boy with a birth-mark. Those spots and marks are considered as fortunate signs. Proportions and qualities of the actual sacrifice are ordered by the shaman.

3) Uordach-dzjusjugjach-Aj, i. e. the angry deity who punishes a man for his crimes and transgressions. He is offered a horse or a bull.

The teacher Pripuzov mentions that this god gives courageous men, fiery horses,

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and powerful bulls.

4) The same author also mentions a god, Chotoj-Aj, who gives a mediocre breed only, but in larger quantity, and with a prevalence of female individuals.

5) Eechsit, a female deity who always accompanies a wanderer on his way and supports him in his good deeds. She enjoys particular love and esteem among the Yakuts. Sacrifices are willingly made for her. She is regarded as the Yakut guardian angel. According to the shamans, there is no protection for him who may have offended Eechsit and is abandoned by her. He is exposed to the evil spirits. If someone escapes a peril, he says that Eechsit has aided him. She is offered a young mare.

6) Baj-Bajanaj is the deity who protects game-hunting. He accompanies the hunter everywhere and helps him in his undertakings. When a Yakut goes to hunt in order to get skins, he carves an idol of wood, and tinges it with the blood of an animal he has killed in his honor. The shaman and the guests eat the meat of the killed animal, and the statue of Baj-Bajan is put in the front corner on the oron of honor. Oron is the table of honor in the left front corner. Sometimes Baj-Bajan stays in his corner for many years.

7) Ukulan, the deity of the fishermen. He lives in the water and affords successful fishing. He is offered two-years-old black calf.

The following gods and good demons may still be mentioned: Kis-tanara, the deity of the stables. He is represented in human appearance, dressed with a sable-fur. His

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statue is kept in a bag of chamois leather which is adorned with motley pearls. On important occasions he is asked for help by throwing grease into the fire. [178]

The demon of the fire, An-drachan-toen, or Al-ot-iccitja enjoys equal honors. He is offered part of the meal which is being eaten. It is thrown into the fire.

An-darchan is fancied as an aged man. He is the mediator between mankind and the evil spirits. No sacrifice is made without a secondary sacrifice for him. He is the door through which one can reach another demon.

The god of the fire is characterized by benevolence. He helps in all circumstances, he displays a sensible and vivid interest in the actions of the people, which is repaid¹ by giving him part of the meal which being eaten and throwing it into the fire. The demon is an honest old man. He is known as Byrjachja-bytika-kyryl-tjusjumjat, i. e. the appearance with the white beard.

As demons, or evil spirits, are considered:

1) Z-chosgon-ojun-kinjas, i. e. Satanas, the prince of the monsters. He sends the people evils, diseases, causes deaths of the cattle, and sterility. To appease him a light-brown foal is sacrificed (surzagyl).

2) Bologur-chotuna, Dochsun-Dujan, and Bachsy-toena-al-ljachaj are demons, the former of male, the latter of female sex. According to the shamans, both of them once were human beings, but were changed into demons on account of their sins. They

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deprive men of their intelligence. They are offered a mare of spotted color (cugur).

3) Dzachtan-byradaj, or Jurjun-ogustach once was a shaman and possessed a white bull. The bull was stolen so the shaman became malicious. After his death he was punished by becoming a demon. He causes diseases, especially chest ailments in young children with fatal exit, unless he be offered a three years old calf.

4) Sordach-conach was a female shaman when she was alive. She causes several epidemics. According to the shamans her appearance is ugly, she has but one hand and foot, and one eye in the middle of the forehead. She is offered a red-stained cow (kéchebiren).

5) Makyny-kysa-tynyraachtach-kjadzjaj, a former shaman woman, causes madness and other diseases. She is offered a cow with water-bright horns and claws, a bald spot on the forehead, a motley tail, and generally red color... To honor her she is carved as an idol which is adorned with a giant fur. In this idol the fury is inevitably closed in, according to shaman notions. The idol is known as kys-tagara, virgin goddess. She is put in the angle of the central timber to the left of the fireplace, and remains untouched from generation to generation. It is venerated that much especially because the slightest touch may cause the ire of the Fury.

6) Buchar-dodar is the demon of death. Therefore he rides on the bull Bor-kurjun, i. e. the earth-pale panther. She lives in the nether world where like him, and with the exceptions of a few minor ones, there are eight demons of equal rank.

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7) Syry-kysa is a woman shaman as to her origin. She seduces people to do wrong, to suffer evil. She is not offered anything. The shaman has no difficulty in exorcizing her.

8) Sjulljukjuter are the demons of the waters. They live the way mortal men do, and raise cattle. In the waters there is much moss. If the latter is brought on the dry ground, it changes to meney, though, after three days it will be moss again.

9) Sebeka is a little ugly girl with an enormous belly. She lives in a poor Kalmuk hut (choton) and brings mischief upon the cattle.

Aside from the just mentioned demons and Furies the Yakuts believe also in some less important entities, such as Torbos-abysyta (the demon of the calves), and Kjaljama (the demon of carnal desire). The latter is by no means represented as an agreeable fellow, and [179] he is even thought to be a stammerer. This conception has a certain originality. Whenever the shaman appears in performance of Kjaljama, he makes the Yakuts laugh. They have their fun with him, ask him where he was coming from. Then the shaman (in the name of the demon) replies, he was coming from very far indeed, as far as a crippled fir was tall, and that he had had to stay over night nine times on his journey. Then the demon asks if there were not perhaps some pretty girls in the neighborhood. If the answer is in the affirmative, he suddenly grows merry, and, to the Yakuts immense delight, he makes grimaces. The shaman, too, assumes the role of the Kjaljama for fun.